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(54) Title: MINIATURE MONOLITHIC OPTICAL DEVICES FOR DWDM

(57) Abstract: A miniature monolithic optical add-drop multiplexer that comprises a dispersive optical element, a wavelength filter array and a diverter. The miniature monolithic optical DWDM add-drop multiplexer can be fabricated using micro- and nano-scale techniques common to the semiconductor industry. The operating principles and some characteristics of the DWDM add-drop multiplexer are described. The device will be useful in the field of optical communication as a component within networks that perform all of the necessary switching, adding, dropping, and manipulating of optical signals entirely in the optical domain.

MINIATURE MONOLITHIC OPTICAL DEVICES FOR DWDMField of the Invention

[0001] This invention relates generally to optical communication systems and components. More particularly, the invention relates to optical apparatus, such as demultiplexers, add-drop multiplexers (OADM), variable optical attenuators, optical switches, and similar devices, comprising micro- and nano-scale optical structures and components built from and upon monolithic substrates.

Background of the Invention

[0002] In the field of telecommunication, it is recognized that optical communication components and systems, which use light waves and beams to carry information, offer many considerable advantages over conventional copper wire-based communication systems that carry information in the form of electrical signals. One advantage is the significantly greater amount of information that can be carried by a physical connection employing a single fiber optic strand as compared to a copper wire circuit.

[0003] To optimize the amount of information that can be transmitted along a single optical fiber, the technique known as Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) is now being implemented. The use of DWDM is accelerating at a rapid pace, due to the development of essential network components such as optical fiber, infrared laser transmitters, fiber amplifiers, and the like. However, the rate of growth of DWDM networks is currently limited in part by the availability of low-cost mass produced components that provide acceptable reliability and resistance to environmental effects, such as, vibration, mechanical stresses, and temperature fluctuations.

[0004] In these optical telecommunications systems, information is transmitted in the

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- form of infrared light signals that originate at laser sources. Each laser source is tuned to emit an infrared light beam comprising a narrow band of wavelengths (or, equivalently, frequencies) centered at a primary frequency. As used herein, the word "color" describes a characteristic band of wavelengths centered around a specific primary wavelength as emitted by a
- 5 telecommunications laser. Information is encoded in each infrared beam by temporally modulating the laser power. Each primary frequency corresponds to a value specified by the standard International Telecommunication Union (ITU) grid. The ITU standard specifies transmission frequencies that are spaced at 100 GHz intervals, although a reduction to 50 or 25 GHz is anticipated as the technology evolves.
- 10 [0005] In DWDM, many distinct colors of infrared light may be transmitted simultaneously along a single optical fiber, each color carrying information that is distinct from information carried by other colors. Devices called multiplexers physically superimpose the light beams from several colors thereby creating multi-color light beams wherein each color carries its encoded information. The combined information is transmitted some distance. At a
- 15 terminus of the transmission path, demultiplexers physically separate or disperse the multiple colors received from a single optical fiber onto multiple output fibers, each output fiber carrying a single color, thereby permitting the information carried by each color to be directed to its intended destination. An optical add-drop multiplexer removes light of a particular color from a polychromatic beam, and replaces the color removed with a beam having substantially the same
- 20 color. This process of removing and replacing signals corresponding to a specific color provides the capability to switch signals into and out of optical beams.
- [0006] The ideal demultiplexer will direct all of the incoming light of each color onto its corresponding output optical fiber. However, in actual demultiplexer devices the color separation is generally imperfect – not all of the light of each color entering the demultiplexer is
- 25 transmitted into each respective output beam, and a portion of the light from each color is

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transmitted into the paths of neighboring beams. This leakage causes undesirable performance effects such as crosstalk and insertion loss that must be limited in magnitude for the device to be practical.

[0007] At present, demultiplexing is often accomplished utilizing devices based upon either diffraction gratings or precision interference filters. Neither type of device is amenable to cost-effective mass production while maintaining acceptable performance.

[0008] For filter-based demultiplexers, such as those described in T.E. Stern, K. Bola, *Multiwavelength Optical Networks, A Layered Approach*, Addison Wesley, 1999, each filter must be manufactured separately from the others using multilayer vapor deposition techniques. The filters are then installed manually or robotically in an optical substrate and aligned to project light onto individual output optical fibers. Achieving and maintaining optical alignment in spite of thermal and mechanical stresses confounds attempts to reliably mass produce these devices, adding to the production cost and diminishing long-term reliability and resistance to environmental influences. Furthermore, the filters are frequently operated in a serial configuration, such that one color is transmitted through one filter while all other colors are reflected to the next, and so on. In this configuration, the insertion loss accumulates so that the last transmitted color has significantly higher loss than earlier colors.

[0009] Grating-based devices offer the advantage of being parallel rather than serial demultiplexers, and therefore have improved insertion loss uniformity. However, to achieve acceptable crosstalk, the optical components within grating-based devices must be several centimeters in size. Therefore, like filter-based devices, grating-based demultiplexers are difficult to align and maintain aligned. Low-cost mass production of reliable devices remains elusive.

[0010] Recently, demultiplexers based on arrayed waveguide gratings (AWGs) have been introduced commercially. These small, thin monolithic devices, generally fabricated from

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silicon-based or InP-based wafer substrates, offer promise as low-cost components that can be mass produced. Nevertheless, despite more than a decade of intense development of AWG technology, and the emergence of several companies offering AWG products, the performance specifications achieved by production AWGs remain several orders of magnitude worse than theoretical predictions.

[0011] Monolithic demultiplexer devices based on waveguide gratings etched into wafers of semiconductor materials such as InP have been described in recent patent and technical literature. These devices also offer potential as low-cost mass-producible components but, like AWGs, have not yet achieved acceptable performance specifications. In particular, etched waveguide gratings demonstrated to date suffer from excessive crosstalk due to the small size and imperfections in fabrication of the grating structure.

#### Summary of the Invention

[0012] In one embodiment, the invention provides a miniature core optical bench structure that eliminate the limitations and deficiencies of previously described devices for separating colors in optical telecommunications systems. Embodiments of the invention that combine the core optical bench structure with other optical components provide systems and methods to manipulate optical signals entirely in the optical domain, without having to convert any signal to an electrical signal from an optical signal, or the reverse. The manipulations include switching, adding, dropping, modulating and attenuating optical signals, such as optical beams that carry one or more information streams. The optical bench and structures based thereon can have, among different embodiments, monolithic structures that are fabricated conveniently by the methods of micromachining from single substrates, such as silicon wafers and the like.

[0013] Micromachining of silicon, as an example, allows manufacturing with good yield, in a technology that employs well developed fabrication methods on a material that is relatively

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inexpensive and is readily obtained. Furthermore, the structures produced by micromachining of silicon or other semiconductor materials, such as indium phosphide, are all part of, or are connected to, a single wafer of a solid material, and are therefore likely to maintain alignment under the stresses of thermal changes, mechanical shocks, and the like. To the extent that the 5 optical bench core structure is made of a well understood semiconductor material, it is also possible to build control circuitry directly into the semiconductor wafer, further simplifying the interconnection of the optical bench with external control circuitry such as computers and the like.

[0014] The invention, in one embodiment, provides a miniature monolithic optical 10 wavelength demultiplexer comprising an assembly of optical components built on a monolithic platform. In another embodiment, the invention provides an optical add-drop multiplexer. In still other embodiments, the invention provides optical attenuators,  $n \times n$  optical switches, and related optical signal manipulation hardware.

[0015] In one aspect, the invention relates to a miniature monolithic optical apparatus 15 that includes a wavelength dispersing optical element that receives a multi-color light beam and separates the light spatially, providing a plurality of substantially single color optical beams, each substantially single color optical beam containing primarily a single color different from that of the other substantially single color optical beams. In some embodiments, a small portion of the light from other colors can remain in a substantially single-color optical beam after 20 passing through the wavelength dispersing optical element. The apparatus also includes a wavelength filter array having at least one wavelength filter element. Each wavelength filter element receives one of the plurality of substantially single color optical beams and removes therefrom the portions of light from colors other than the primary color of that beam, thereby providing a purified single color output beam substantially free of light from other colors.

25 [0016] In some embodiments, one or more of the substrate, the wavelength dispersive

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optical element, and the wavelength filter array comprises at least one material selected from the group consisting of silicon, silicon monoxide, silicon dioxide, silicon-germanium alloys, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and indium phosphide. In other embodiments, different materials can be employed. In one embodiment, the apparatus is preferably made from materials that are

5. amenable to semiconductor fabrication processes.

[0017] In one embodiment, at least one of the wavelength dispersive optical element and the wavelength filter array elements comprises an optical waveguide. In one embodiment, at least one of the wavelength dispersive optical element and the wavelength filter array elements comprises a miniature free-space optical element. With regard to the invention, the term "free-space" refers to optical systems or components in which light travels in a fluid, such as air, or in 10 a vacuum, rather than through a solid waveguide material.

[0018] In some embodiments, the apparatus can further comprise an input optical structure that receives the input beam. The input optical structure can comprise at least one material selected from the group consisting of silicon, silicon monoxide, silicon dioxide, silicon-15 germanium alloys, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and indium phosphide. The input optical structure can comprise an optical waveguide, or a miniature free-space optical element. In some embodiments, the miniature monolithic optical apparatus further comprises an optical waveguide that communicates the input beam from an external source.

[0019] In some embodiments, the apparatus further comprises an array of output optical structures having at least one output element, said at least one output element transmitting an output beam. The array of output optical structures can comprise optical waveguides, or miniature free-space optical elements. The array of output optical structures can comprise at 20 least one material selected from the group consisting of silicon, silicon monoxide, silicon dioxide, silicon-germanium alloys, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and indium phosphide.

25 [0020] The apparatus can further comprise an optical waveguide that communicates the

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output beam from said output element to a photodiode.

[0021] In one embodiment, each color comprises a narrow band of wavelengths centered on a primary wavelength, which can be designated by the International Telecommunications Union as one of a set of discrete wavelengths to be utilized for optical telecommunications.

5 [0022] In some embodiments, the wavelength dispersive optical element is a selected one of a prism, a grating, or a grism. In some embodiments, the wavelength filter array is a selected one of an array of interference filters, an array of waveguide Bragg gratings, an array of Fabry-Perot interferometers, an array of resonantly-coupled waveguide structures, or an array of waveguide ring resonators.

10 [0023] In some embodiments, the miniature monolithic optical apparatus further comprises a diverter that intercepts said purified single-color output beam and diverts at least a portion of said output beam from the first direction of propagation..

15 [0024] In one embodiment, the diverter comprises at least one material selected from the group consisting of silicon, silicon monoxide, silicon dioxide, silicon-germanium alloys, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and indium phosphide.

20 [0025] In one embodiment, the diverter is fabricated on the miniature monolithic substrate. In one embodiment, the diverter comprises a reflective surface. In one embodiment, the diverter comprises an electro-mechanical actuator that can move the reflective surface. In one embodiment, the diverter comprises an optical resonator. In one embodiment, the diverter comprises an electrically-driven actuator that can alter a resonant frequency of the optical resonator. In one embodiment, the diverter is capable of being dynamically reconfigured to divert at least a portion of a selected one of the plurality of purified single color output beams.

25 [0026] In one embodiment, the miniature monolithic optical apparatus further comprises a second diverter adjacent to the miniature monolithic optical demultiplexer, and optionally, a second wavelength dispersive optical element. The second diverter receives a second input

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beam having a purified single color substantially identical to the purified single color of the output beam that is diverted. The optional second wavelength dispersive optical element is capable of combining a plurality of spatially-separated substantially single color optical beams, at least one beam containing primarily a single color that is different than the color of another 5 substantially single color optical beam, into a single beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors. The second diverter is adapted to direct the second input beam for combination with another spatially-separated substantially single color optical beam having a color distinct from that of the second input beam to form a second output beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors, using a selected one of the wavelength dispersive optical 10 element and the optionally fabricated second wavelength dispersive optical element to effect the combination.

[0027] In another aspect, the invention relates to a method of processing an optical beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping colors. The method comprises providing an assembly of miniature optical elements, the assembly comprising a monolithic substrate, a wavelength dispersive optical element fabricated on said monolithic substrate, and a wavelength filter array 15 fabricated on said monolithic substrate. In addition, the method comprises receiving an input beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors, dispersing the input beam, by use of the wavelength dispersive optical element, into a plurality of spatially-separated substantially single color optical beams, each beam containing primarily a single color that is 20 different than the color of the other substantially single color optical beams, and filtering said at least one of the substantially single-color optical beams and removing therefrom colors other than the designated primary color of that beam, thereby providing at least one purified single-color output beam, said output beam being substantially free of other colors.

[0028] In some embodiments, the input beam is received from an optical waveguide 25 external to said assembly. In some embodiments, the output beam is transmitted to an optical

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waveguide external to said assembly.

[0029] In some embodiments, the method further comprises the steps of providing an assembly of miniature optical elements, further comprising a diverter, and intercepting the at least one purified single-color output beam and diverting at least a portion of the output beam 5 from the first direction of propagation.

[0030] In one embodiment, the output beam is transmitted to an optical waveguide external to the assembly.

[0031] In one embodiment, the method further comprises providing a second assembly of miniature optical elements, receiving a second input beam having a purified single color 10 substantially identical to the purified single color of the output beam that is diverted, controlling a direction of propagation of the second input beam, and directing the diverted second input beam and another spatially-separated substantially single color optical beam having a color distinct from that of the diverted second input beam to form a second output beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors. The second assembly of miniature optical 15 elements comprises a second monolithic substrate, a second wavelength dispersive optical element fabricated on the monolithic substrate, the second wavelength dispersive optical element capable of combining a plurality of spatially-separated substantially single color optical beams, at least one beam containing primarily a single color that is different than the color of another substantially single color optical beam, into a single beam having a plurality of spatially 20 overlapping distinct colors, and a second diverter. The direction of propagation of the second input beam is controlled with the second diverter. The second wavelength dispersive optical element is used to combine the second input beam and another spatially-separated substantially single color optical beam.

[0032] In one embodiment, the method further comprises transmitting the second output 25 beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors to an optical waveguide external

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to the second assembly. In one embodiment, the monolithic substrate and the second monolithic substrate are the same monolithic substrate. In one embodiment, the wavelength dispersive optical element and the second wavelength dispersive optical element are the same wavelength dispersive optical element. In one embodiment, the second input beam is the diverted purified single-color output beam. In one embodiment, the second input beam is substantially a duplicate of the diverted purified single color output beam. In one embodiment, the second input beam is a modified version of the diverted purified single color output beam.

[0033] In yet another aspect, the invention features a method of fabricating a miniature monolithic optical apparatus. The method comprises utilizing semiconductor fabrication methods to create a wavelength dispersive element and an array of wavelength filtering elements upon a monolithic substrate, the combination of the wavelength dispersive element and the array of wavelength filtering elements providing a miniature monolithic optical demultiplexer. In some embodiments, the wavelength dispersive optical element and the wavelength filter array are formed by semiconductor fabrication processes. In some embodiments, the method further comprises fabricating an input optical structure by semiconductor fabrication processes. In some embodiments, the method further comprises fabricating an output optical structure by semiconductor fabrication processes.

[0034] In some embodiments, the method further comprises the step of providing a diverter adjacent to the miniature monolithic optical demultiplexer, the diverter adapted to intercept and divert at least a portion of an optical beam that passes through the miniature monolithic optical demultiplexer.

[0035] In one embodiment, the diverter is formed by semiconductor fabrication processes. In one embodiment, the diverter component is formed on the monolithic substrate.

[0036] In one embodiment, the fabrication method further comprises the step of 25 fabricating an input optical structure by semiconductor fabrication processes. In one

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embodiment, the fabrication method further comprises the step of fabricating an output optical structure by semiconductor fabrication processes.

[0037] In one embodiment, the fabrication method further comprises the steps of providing a second diverter adjacent to the miniature monolithic optical demultiplexer, the 5 diverter receiving a second input beam having a purified single color substantially identical to the purified single color of the output beam that is diverted, and optionally fabricating, utilizing semiconductor fabrication methods, a second wavelength dispersive optical element, the second wavelength dispersive optical element capable of combining a plurality of spatially-separated substantially single color optical beams, at least one beam containing primarily a single color 10 that is different than the color of another substantially single color optical beam, into a single beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors. The diverter is adapted to direct the second input beam for combination with another spatially-separated substantially single color optical beam having a color distinct from that of the second input beam to form a second output beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors, using a selected one of the 15 wavelength dispersive optical element and the optionally fabricated second wavelength dispersive optical element to effect the combination.

[0038] In one aspect, the invention features an optical apparatus that includes a wavelength dispersive optical element receiving a substantially collimated input signal having multiple wavelengths and providing a wavelength dispersed output signal, and a spatial 20 modulator element receiving the wavelength dispersed output signal and providing an output signal comprising at least a portion of each dispersed wavelength.

[0039] In one embodiment, the optical apparatus further includes a second wavelength dispersive optical element receiving the output signal provided by the spatial modulator and providing a substantially collimated output signal. The substantially collimated output signal can 25 be directed in substantially the same direction as that of the substantially collimated input signal.

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[0040] The optical apparatus can additionally include an absorbing surface that absorbs selected dispersed wavelengths of the spatial modulator output signal, the spatial modulator controlling selection of the wavelengths. The selection of the dispersed wavelengths to be absorbed can be controlled dynamically by the spatial modulator. In addition, the optical 5 apparatus can include a variable reflection filter. Alternatively, the optical apparatus can include a variable transmission filter.

[0041] In another aspect, the invention features an optical apparatus that includes a wavelength dispersive optical element receiving a substantially collimated input signal propagating in a first direction, the input signal having multiple wavelengths, and providing a 10 wavelength dispersed output signal, a spatial modulator element receiving the wavelength dispersed output signal and providing an output signal comprising at least a portion of each dispersed wavelength, and the wavelength dispersive optical element receiving the output signal provided by the spatial modulator and providing a substantially collimated output signal propagating in a second direction. In one embodiment, the second direction of propagation is 15 substantially opposite to the first direction of propagation.

[0042] In still another aspect, the invention features an optical apparatus that includes a wavelength dispersive optical element receiving a substantially collimated input signal propagating in a first direction, the input signal having multiple wavelengths, and providing a 20 first wavelength dispersed output signal and a second wavelength dispersed output signal, a spatial modulator element receiving the first wavelength dispersed output signal and the second wavelength dispersed output signal and providing a transmitted output signal and a reflected signal, and a collimating optical element receiving the reflected signal and providing a substantially collimated output signal propagating in a second direction substantially opposite to the first direction.

25 [0043] In one embodiment, the wavelength dispersive optical element and the

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collimating optical element are the same optical structure viewed from opposite ends thereof. In another embodiment, one of the transmitted output signal and the reflected signal comprises a signal modulated to have substantially zero intensity.

[0044] In a further aspect, the invention features a monolithic optical apparatus that includes a wavelength dispersive optical element receiving a substantially collimated input signal having multiple wavelengths and providing a wavelength dispersed output signal, and a spatial modulator element receiving the wavelength dispersed output signal and providing an output signal comprising at least a portion of each dispersed wavelength, wherein the wavelength dispersive optical element and the spatial modulator element are provided on a single substrate.

10 [0045] In yet another aspect, the invention features a microelectromechanical optical apparatus that includes a wavelength dispersive optical element receiving a substantially collimated input signal having multiple wavelengths and providing a wavelength dispersed output signal, and a spatial modulator element receiving the wavelength dispersed output signal and providing an output signal comprising at least a portion of each dispersed wavelength.

15 [0046] The wavelength dispersive optical element and the spatial modulator element can be provided on a single substrate. In one embodiment, the single substrate comprises a single crystal. In another embodiment, the single substrate comprises a semiconductor single crystal. In yet another embodiment, the single substrate comprises polycrystalline material.

[0047] The foregoing and other objects, aspects, features, and advantages of the invention will become more apparent from the following description and from the claims.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0048] The objects and features of the invention can be better understood with reference to the drawings described below, and the claims. The drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead generally being placed upon illustrating the principles of the invention. In the drawings, like numerals are used to indicate like parts throughout the various views.

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[0049] Figure 1 shows a basic diffraction grating configuration known in the prior art.

[0050] Figure 2 shows a diagram that depicts a 1000 slit grating diffraction pattern.

[0051] Figure 3 shows a schematic diagram of an embodiment of a grating that spatially separates or disperses colors input from an optical fiber, and a filter array that purifies the colors  
5 of the dispersed beams, according to the invention.

[0052] Figure 4 shows a schematic diagram of an embodiment of an exemplary DWDM demultiplexer using a combination of a wavelength dispersive grating and an optical filter array, according to the invention.

[0053] Figure 5 shows a diagram that depicts the reflectance versus mirror separation for  
10 a Fabry-Perot etalon at two neighboring ITU wavelengths.

[0054] Figure 6 shows a schematic diagram that depicts an embodiment of an exemplary optical add drop multiplexer, according to the invention.

#### Detailed Description

[0055] An ideal demultiplexer will direct all of the incoming light of each color onto its  
15 corresponding output optical fiber. The fraction of light of each color that is not successfully transmitted into its corresponding output beam is called the insertion loss, and is usually expressed in units of dB. The fraction of the light power from neighboring colors that remain in the separated beams in addition to the primary wavelength is called the crosstalk, also usually expressed in dB. Desirable characteristics for telecommunications demultiplexers include  
20 insertion loss of less than 3 dB, and crosstalk of less than approximately -40 dB. Furthermore, it is desirable to achieve these characteristics in devices that are compact in size, resistant to effects of the external environment, and easy to manufacture in large quantities at low cost.  
  
Calculations presented below show that to achieve the crosstalk specification by using a simple diffraction grating to separate colors, the grating must be more than 3 cm wide, a size which is  
25 not amenable to low-cost mass production.

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[0056] In contrast, it is shown below that the combination of a grating and a simple wavelength filter enables reduction of the grating size, and the sizes of the associated optical components, to less than 2 mm wide and a fraction of a mm deep. Components of these sizes are amenable to manufacture by etching of silicon or other materials, enabling the use of mature 5 semiconductor micromachining manufacturing techniques, which leads to scalable mass production.

[0057] Furthermore, by shrinking the optical elements to the size of the optical fibers, and manufacturing them collectively as an "optical bench on a chip" or as an integrated waveguide structure, the difficulties associated with macroscopic components, such as assembly 10 and alignment, are eliminated. Stability is improved because movement, due to thermal expansion or mechanical vibration, of optical elements relative to fiber core positions is reduced in proportion to the size of the optical elements. In addition, monolithic structures effectively eliminate the possibility of misalignment caused by the relative translational and/or rotational motion of components, because a single substrate significantly reduces such motion. Insertion 15 loss is reduced by increasing the efficiency of coupling light in and out of optical fibers with miniature optical elements.

#### *Grating Basics*

[0058] Figure 1 shows a basic diffraction grating configuration 100. It is essentially a transmissive or reflective optical element 110 upon which a series of equally spaced linear 20 grooves or lines 120 are cut. The spacing between lines is called the grating period. The diffraction angle,  $\theta$ , the incident angle,  $i$ , the grating period,  $d$ , and the wavelength of the light,  $\lambda$ , are related by

$$d(\sin i + \sin \theta) = m\lambda \quad (1)$$

where  $m$  is an integer called the diffraction order.

25 [0059] The angular dispersion,  $\delta\theta$ , between beams of different wavelengths emerging

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from this grating is given by

$$\delta\theta = \delta\lambda/(d \cos\theta) \quad (2)$$

where  $\delta\lambda$  is the wavelength separation between input wavelengths. For ITU grid wavelengths, the channel separation in terms of frequency is 100 GHz, which in terms of wavelength

- 5 corresponds to about  $\delta\lambda = 0.8$  nm and  $\delta\theta = 1.28$  mrad. Like any optical element, the grating does not produce a perfect single output "beam" at each wavelength. The output is actually a diffraction pattern consisting, for each wavelength, of a principal peak and multiple relatively weak sidelobes. The angular half width of the principal peak,  $\Delta\theta$ , which is the same as the approximate angular spacing between sidelobes, is given by

10  $\Delta\theta = \lambda/(Nd \cos\theta) \quad (3)$

where  $N$  is the number of grating lines intercepted by the incident beam (and therefore  $Nd$  is the size of the incident beam). Note that, for a simple grating, the relative amplitudes of the sidelobes are independent of the grating period and incident beam size.

- [0060] The intensity pattern 200 for the diffracted beam created by the basic grating 100 is shown in Figure 2. Only first order,  $m = 1$ , is considered. A wavelength of  $\lambda = 1550$  nm, corresponding to the optical telecommunications band, is used. A line spacing of 1000 lines/mm has been selected, but closer spacing can be used. Figure 2 shows how the power of each sidelobe 220 decreases the farther away it is from the principal peak 210. For example, the third sidelobe is 20 dB weaker than the principal peak.

20 *Crosstalk and Insertion Loss for Macro-Gratings*

[0061] Crosstalk and insertion loss arise from the use of a grating when any portion of the diffraction pattern from one wavelength overlaps the patterns of its neighbors. Because diffraction patterns are essentially infinitely wide, it is impossible to have zero crosstalk and insertion loss – it is practical only to set limits on their magnitudes. For example, if the grating is

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designed so that none of the principal peak or the first four sidelobes can spatially overlap the neighboring wavelength, then crosstalk is limited to about -17 dB. This constraint requires  $8\Delta\theta = \delta\theta$ . For the 1000 line/mm grating and 100 GHz channel spacing, this constraint requires  $N_d$ , the size of the beam where it intercepts the grating and thus the minimum grating size, to be 16 mm. To accommodate closer channel spacings or reduced crosstalk, a larger grating and incident beam would be required. It is notable that crosstalk of -40 dB, the telecom requirement, is not achieved even with a 30 mm grating size.

[0062] The insertion loss is determined by the amount of light contained in the remaining sidelobes that do overlap neighbors. If there is less than -20 dB (1%) crosstalk between one wavelength and each of its two neighbors, then the throughput is 98% corresponding to an insertion loss of less than 0.1 dB. In practice, it is impractical to have more than 90% of the light incident on the grating emerge in the first grating order — the remainder is lost to higher orders. This increases the practical insertion loss to about 0.5 dB.

#### Miniaturization

[0063] By combining a grating with wavelength filters that block grating-induced sidelobes, the size of the grating can be reduced to 1-2 mm while achieving -40 dB crosstalk and less than 3 dB insertion loss. This combination enables mass production by manufacturing techniques similar to those utilized in the semiconductor industry. The functionality of this combination is illustrated in Figure 3, in which a grating 320 spatially separates or disperses wavelengths input from an optical fiber 300, and a filter array 340 removes side lobes 325 from the multiple beams of light 323 emanating from the grating 320. Output fibers 360 collect the individual beams 335 free of crosstalk from neighboring beams. All components are of the same size scale as the optical fibers 300, 360.

[0064] One exemplary embodiment of a demultiplexer utilizing this concept of grating and wavelength filters is illustrated by Figure 4. In operation, the optical assembly accepts laser

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light from an optical fiber 300, collimates the light with a lens 410, and spatially separates the colors by dispersion with a grating 320. It then focuses the individual colors of light with lens 430 upon a linear array of Fabry-Perot Interferometers (FPIs) 440, each designed to pass only a specific frequency of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) grid. The  
5 demultiplexed light beams are then refocused with a lens array 450 into an array of output optical fibers 460.

[0065] Each FPI shown in Figure 4 is basically a pair of partially reflecting parallel mirrors that form an optical cavity. Interference by the multiple reflections from each mirror surface determines the transmittance and reflectance of the cavity. When the spacing between  
10 mirror elements is equal to an integral multiple of half the wavelength of the incident light, then the cavity becomes perfectly transmissive, regardless of individual mirror reflectance (and ignoring absorption by the mirrors).

[0066] Mathematically, the cavity transmission is described by the following function:

$$\frac{I}{I_0} = \left[ 1 - A/(1-R) \right]^2 / [1 + F \sin^2(\delta/2)] \quad (4)$$

15 where

$I_0$	=	incident power
$I/I_0$	=	transmittance or throughput
$F$	=	$4R/(1-R)^2$
$R$	=	mirror reflectance
20	A	= mirror absorbance
	$\delta$	= $4\pi n l / \lambda$
	$l$	= cavity spacing
	$\lambda$	= wavelength of incident light
	n	= index of refraction of cavity medium at wavelength $\lambda$ .

25 [0067] In another embodiment, the dispersive optical element can be a transmissive or reflective holographic grating (or other element such as a series of prisms) which spatially separates the multiple wavelengths of incident radiation. In another embodiment, the wavelength filter can be a spatial light modulator that selects the dispersed wavelengths of  
30 interest for either reflection or transmission.

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[0068] Figure 5 shows the reflectance as a function of mirror separation near  $\ell = 200 \mu\text{m}$  of an FPI having  $R = 0.8$ ,  $A = 0$ . When  $A = 0$ , the reflectance plus transmittance of the interferometer equals unity. Note that the reflectance of the interferometer is distinct from the reflectance  $R$  of each individual mirror. Curves 510, 520 for two neighboring wavelengths, near 5  $1.5 \mu\text{m}$  and separated by 100 GHz are shown. The calculations show that, with a mirror spacing of  $200 \mu\text{m}$ , one wavelength is fully transmitted while less than 2% of the neighboring grid wavelength is transmitted. If  $A$  is increased to the reasonable value of 0.005, then the transmittance decreases to about 95%. Therefore, this filter provides an additional -17 dB of 10 crosstalk reduction with only 0.2 dB of insertion loss. By increasing  $R$  to 0.9, the additional crosstalk reduction increases to nearly -23 dB while insertion loss increases to about 0.45 dB.

[0069] By combining an FPI array with a diffraction grating, the spatial separation between adjacent wavelengths at the demultiplexer's output can be reduced to the width of the principal diffraction peak, using the FPI to reject sidelobes to achieve the optical telecommunication crosstalk specification. Therefore, the angular width of the principal peak 15 can be increased to equal the angular dispersion between wavelengths, permitting reduction in the width of the diffraction grating. For 100 GHz wavelength separation, a 2 mm grating will suffice (at 1000 lines/mm), while 4 mm is needed to accommodate 50 GHz spacing. Then, approximately 3% of each wavelength will spill over to each of its neighbors, yielding about 0.3 dB of insertion loss and -15 dB of crosstalk prior to, or in the absence of, the FPI. Assuming that 20 the FPI provides crosstalk rejection of -23 dB, total crosstalk is less than -38 dB, or, approximately the required level. Total insertion loss due to the grating, including losses to sidelobes and higher orders, is expected to be about 0.8 dB (83% throughput), and loss due to the FPI will be less than 0.5 dB. Total insertion loss is therefore expected to be less than 1.5 dB.

[0070] It is clear that the wavelength filters utilized in the demultiplexer of Figure 4 need 25 not be an ITU grid FPI array. The array of filters may alternatively be constructed using ITU

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grid interference filters coated onto the ends of the optical fiber array, or by using an array of fiber Bragg gratings, or by any other functionally equivalent filtering technique. Regardless of the construction style, each optical filter is manufactured or tuned to transmit a portion of the wavelength of light delivered to it from the grating and to block nearly all of the light from neighboring wavelengths.

#### Manufacturing

[0071] The exemplary optical elements shown in Figure 4, including the lenses, grating, and the filters, may be manufactured as miniature components on a monolithic silicon or indium phosphide substrate. The components may be microelectromechanical (MEMS) devices, or may be constructed in the form of optical waveguides, or a combination thereof. The techniques for manufacturing the devices are derived from and similar to the techniques utilized to manufacture semiconductor electronic components. These manufacturing methods can involve (i) photolithographic methods using electromagnetic radiation or charged particle beams for defining devices, features, objects, areas and regions, (ii) methods of removing material selectively, such as chemical etching, plasma etching, ion milling, and mechanical cutting or grooving, and (iii) methods of depositing materials, such as chemical vapor deposition, evaporation, ion implantation, plasma deposition and plasma-driven reactions, and solidifying liquids. The materials of fabrication that can be used include silicon, in single crystal and polycrystalline forms, and indium phosphide, as well as selected impurity materials that can impart desired electrical, optical or mechanical properties to silicon or to indium phosphide. Examples of materials that can be employed include (i) electrically active dopants such as boron and phosphorus that can be used to control the electrical, optical and semiconducor properties of the silicon, and dopants such as elements from columns II and VI of the periodic table which can be used to modify the properties of indium phosphide, (ii) elements such as oxygen that can be used to form insulators and chemically unreactive materials such as silicon dioxide when

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combined with silicon, and (iii) elements such as carbon and nitrogen that can be used to form materials such as silicon carbide and silicon nitride that can provide useful properties such as hardness, specific electronic properties, and chemically unreactive layers. Materials that can be deposited on silicon or on indium phosphide, such as other semiconductors, electrical conductors

5 for making connections between devices or to external circuitry, and optical coatings for transporting or controlling light, can all be employed. In addition, circuit elements and devices for generating, detecting, communicating, and processing signals, and for controlling any movable mechanical features of the device can be fabricated on or within the silicon, or the indium phosphide.

10 [0072] A miniature wavelength demultiplexer suitable for optical telecommunication applications and manufacturable by scalable semiconductor microfabrication techniques has been described. The combination of wavelength dispersion and optical filtering has been shown to provide acceptable insertion loss and crosstalk in a miniature footprint. Utilized in reverse, this device can be used as a multiplexer. By adding mirrors 670 (or other reflective surfaces) 15 and lenses 680 to the monolithic device as shown in Figure 6, an optical add-drop multiplexer is created. A mirror 670 or other reflective surface is a diverter of an optical beam that passes through the miniature monolithic wavelength demultiplexer. The diverter intercepts a single color output beam that has been purified of other colors, as described above. The diverter causes the single color output beam to change its direction of propagation, for example, to coincide with 20 a waveguide, such as an optical fiber, for transmission to a detector or signal processor external to the optical add-drop multiplexer. By adding electro-mechanical components that cause the mirrors 670 or other reflective surfaces to move into or out of the optical paths in response to control signals, reconfigurable versions of these devices are enabled. In some embodiments, a second diverter is provided to control the direction of propagation of a second input optical 25 beam, which has substantially the same color as a purified single-color optical beam that is

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removed from an input beam having spatially overlapping distinct colors. The second input beam can be received from a waveguide, such as an optical fiber, that conveys the second input beam from a source external to the optical add-drop multiplexer. The second input beam is used to replace the purified single-color beam that is removed. In some embodiments, the second  
5 input beam is the same beam as the removed beam (e.g., the removed beam is returned to a beam having spatially-overlapping distinct colors). In some embodiments, the removed beam is modified before being returned. In some embodiments, a different beam having the same color as the removed beam is combined into a beam having spatially overlapping distinct colors. In some embodiments, the beam that is returned is substantially a duplicate of the beam that is  
10 removed. In some embodiments, the same wavelength dispersive optical element is used to separate optical beams and to combine optical beams. In other embodiments, a second wavelength dispersive optical element is optionally provided that used to combine optical beams. The second diverter can direct the second input beam to a selected one of the wavelength dispersive optical element and the optionally fabricated second wavelength dispersive optical  
15 element.

[0073] As discussed above, semiconductor manufacturing processes can be used to fabricate all of the components of the optical add-drop multiplexer on and/or within a monolithic substrate. Optionally, the drop portion of the OADM and the add portion of the OADM can be fabricated on different substrates. The substrate can comprise a material selected from the group  
20 consisting of silicon, silicon monoxide, silicon dioxide, silicon-germanium alloys, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and indium phosphide.

[0074] Addition of other components, such as a two-dimensional array of mirrors, can provide functionality for devices such as n x n optical switches. Each of these devices is needed in the rapidly growing optical telecom network, and the optical configuration of the  
25 demultiplexer disclosed herein enables their development.

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[0075] While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to specific preferred embodiments, it should be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and detail may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

5 [0076] What is claimed is:

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Claims

- 1 1. A miniature monolithic optical apparatus, comprising:
  - 2 a monolithic substrate;
  - 3 a wavelength dispersive optical element fabricated on said monolithic substrate, said
  - 4 wavelength dispersive optical element receiving an input beam having a plurality of
  - 5 spatially overlapping distinct colors and providing an output signal composed of a
  - 6 plurality of spatially separated substantially single-color beams, each substantially
  - 7 single-color beam having a primary wavelength that is different than the primary
  - 8 wavelengths of the other substantially single-color beams; and
  - 9 a wavelength filter array fabricated on said monolithic substrate and having at least one
  - 10 filter element, said at least one filter element receiving a selected one of said plurality
  - 11 of spatially separated substantially single-color optical beams and removing therefrom
  - 12 any portions of beams of other primary wavelengths that were separated incompletely
  - 13 from the selected beam by the wavelength dispersive optical element, thereby providing
  - 14 a purified single-color output beam substantially free of colors associated with other
  - 15 primary wavelengths.
- 1 2. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 1, wherein the substrate comprises at
- 2 least one material selected from the group consisting of silicon, silicon monoxide, silicon
- 3 dioxide, silicon-germanium alloys, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and indium phosphide.
- 1 3. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 2, wherein the substrate comprises a
- 2 material that is amenable to processing using semiconductor fabrication processes.
- 1 4. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one of the

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2 wavelength dispersive optical element and the wavelength filter array comprises at least one  
3 material selected from the group consisting of silicon, silicon monoxide, silicon dioxide, silicon-  
4 germanium alloys, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and indium phosphide.

1 5. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one of the  
2 wavelength dispersive optical element and the wavelength filter array elements comprises an  
3 optical waveguide.

1 6. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one of the  
2 wavelength dispersive optical element and the wavelength filter array elements comprises a  
3 miniature free-space optical element.

1 7. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an input  
2 optical structure that receives the input beam.

1 8. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 7, wherein the input optical structure  
2 comprises at least one material selected from the group consisting of silicon, silicon monoxide,  
3 silicon dioxide, silicon-germanium alloys, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and indium phosphide.

1 9. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 7, wherein the input optical structure  
2 comprises an optical waveguide.

1 10. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 7 wherein the input optical structure  
2 comprises a miniature free-space optical element.

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1 11. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 7, further comprising an optical  
2 waveguide that communicates the input beam from an external source.

1 12. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an array of  
2 output optical structures having at least one output element, said at least one output element  
3 transmitting an output beam.

1 13. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 12, wherein the array of output  
2 optical structures comprise at least one material selected from the group consisting of silicon,  
3 silicon monoxide, silicon dioxide, silicon-germanium alloys, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and  
4 indium phosphide.

1 14. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 12, wherein the array of output  
2 optical structures comprise optical waveguides.

1 15. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 12, wherein the array of output  
2 optical structures comprise miniature free-space optical elements.

1 16. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 12, further comprising an optical  
2 waveguide that communicates said output beam from said output element to an external receiver

1 17. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 1, wherein each color comprises a  
2 narrow band of wavelengths centered on a primary wavelength.

1 18. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 17, wherein each primary

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2 wavelength is designated by the International Telecommunications Union as one of a set of  
3 discrete wavelengths to be utilized for optical telecommunications.

1 19. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 1, wherein the wavelength dispersive  
2 optical element is a selected one of a prism, a grating, or a grism.

1 20. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 1, wherein the wavelength filter  
2 array is a selected one of an array of interference filters, an array of waveguide Bragg gratings,  
3 an array of Fabry-Perot interferometers, an array of resonantly-coupled waveguide structures, or  
4 an array of waveguide ring resonators.

1 21. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 1, apparatus further comprising:  
2 a diverter that intercepts said purified single-color output beam and diverts at least a  
3 portion of said output beam from the first direction of propagation.

1 22. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 21, wherein the diverter comprises at  
2 least one material selected from the group consisting of silicon, silicon monoxide, silicon  
3 dioxide, silicon-germanium alloys, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and indium phosphide.

1 23. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 21, wherein the diverter is fabricated  
2 on said miniature monolithic substrate.

1 24. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 21, wherein the diverter comprises a  
2 reflective surface.

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1 25. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 24, wherein the diverter comprises  
2 an electro-mechanical actuator that can move said reflective surface.

1 26. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 21, wherein the diverter comprises  
2 an optical resonator.

1 27. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 26, wherein the diverter comprises  
2 an electrically-driven actuator that can alter a resonant frequency of said optical resonator.

1 28. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 21, wherein the diverter is capable of  
2 being dynamically reconfigured to divert at least a portion of a selected one of the plurality of  
3 purified single color output beams.

1 29. The miniature monolithic optical apparatus of claim 21, further comprising:  
2 a second diverter adjacent to said miniature monolithic optical demultiplexer, said  
3 diverter receiving a second input beam having a purified single color substantially  
4 identical to the purified single color of said output beam that is diverted; and  
5 optionally, a second wavelength dispersive optical element, said second wavelength  
6 dispersive optical element capable of combining a plurality of spatially-separated  
7 substantially single color optical beams, at least one beam containing primarily a single  
8 color that is different than the color of another substantially single color optical beam,  
9 into a single beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors;  
10 wherein said second diverter is adapted to direct said second input beam for combination  
11 with another spatially-separated substantially single color optical beam having a color  
12 distinct from that of said second input beam to form a second output beam having a

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13       plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors, using a selected one of said  
14       wavelength dispersive optical element and said optionally fabricated second  
15       wavelength dispersive optical element to effect said combination.

1       30.      A method of processing an optical beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping  
2       colors, comprising the steps of:

3                 providing an assembly of miniature optical elements, comprising:  
4                 a monolithic substrate;  
5                 a wavelength dispersive optical element fabricated on said monolithic substrate; and  
6                 a wavelength filter array fabricated on said monolithic substrate;  
7                 receiving an input beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors;  
8                 dispersing the input beam, by use of the wavelength dispersive optical element, into a  
9                 plurality of spatially-separated substantially single color optical beams, each beam  
10               containing primarily a single color that is different than the color of the other  
11               substantially single color optical beams; and  
12               filtering said at least one of the substantially single-color optical beams and removing  
13               therefrom colors other than the designated primary color of that beam, thereby  
14               providing at least one purified single-color output beam, said output beam being  
15               substantially free of other colors.

1       31.      The method of claim 30, wherein the input beam is received from an optical waveguide  
2       external to said assembly.

1       32.      The method of claim 30, wherein the output beam is transmitted to an optical waveguide  
2       external to said assembly.

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1    33.    The method of claim 30, further comprising the steps of:  
2                providing said assembly of miniature optical elements, further comprising a diverter; and  
3                intercepting said at least one purified single-color output beam and diverting at least a  
4                portion of said output beam from the first direction of propagation.

1    34.    The method of claim 33, wherein the output beam is transmitted to an optical waveguide  
2                external to said assembly.

1    35.    The method of claim 33, further comprising:  
2                providing a second assembly of miniature optical elements, comprising:  
3                        a second monolithic substrate;  
4                        a second wavelength dispersive optical element fabricated on said monolithic  
5                        substrate, said second wavelength dispersive optical element capable of combining  
6                        a plurality of spatially-separated substantially single color optical beams, at least  
7                        one beam containing primarily a single color that is different than the color of  
8                        another substantially single color optical beam, into a single beam having a  
9                        plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors; and  
10                  a second diverter;  
11                receiving a second input beam having a purified single color substantially identical to the  
12                purified single color of said output beam that is diverted;  
13                controlling a direction of propagation of said second input beam with said second  
14                diverter; and  
15                directing said diverted second input beam and another spatially-separated substantially  
16                single color optical beam having a color distinct from that of said diverted second input  
17                beam to said second wavelength dispersive optical element to form a second output

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18 beam having a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors.

1 36. The method of claim 35, further comprising transmitting said second output beam having  
2 a plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors to an optical waveguide external to said second  
3 assembly.

1 37. The method of claim 35 wherein said monolithic substrate and said second monolithic  
2 substrate are the same monolithic substrate.

1 38. The method of claim 35 wherein said wavelength dispersive optical element and said  
2 second wavelength dispersive optical element are the same wavelength dispersive optical  
3 element.

1 39. The method of claim 35 wherein said second input beam is said diverted purified single-  
2 color output beam.

1 40. The method of claim 39 wherein said second input beam is substantially a duplicate of  
2 said diverted purified single color output beam.

1 41. The method of claim 39 wherein said second input beam is a modified version of said  
2 diverted purified single color output beam.

1 42. A method of fabricating a miniature monolithic optical apparatus comprising the step of:  
2 utilizing semiconductor fabrication methods to create a wavelength dispersive element  
3 and an array of wavelength filtering elements upon a monolithic substrate, the

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4 combination of the wavelength dispersive element and the array of wavelength filtering  
5 elements providing a miniature monolithic optical demultiplexer.

1 43. The fabrication method of claim 42, wherein the wavelength dispersive optical element  
2 and the wavelength filter array are formed by semiconductor fabrication processes.

1 44. The fabrication method of claim 42, further comprising the step of fabricating an input  
2 optical structure by semiconductor fabrication processes.

1 45. The fabrication method of claim 42, further comprising the step of fabricating an output  
2 optical structure by semiconductor fabrication processes.

1 46. The fabrication method of claim 42, further comprising the step of:  
2 providing a diverter adjacent to said miniature monolithic optical demultiplexer, said  
3 diverter adapted to intercept and divert at least a portion of an optical beam that passes  
4 through said miniature monolithic optical demultiplexer.

1 47. The fabrication method of claim 46, wherein the diverter is formed by semiconductor  
2 fabrication processes.

1 48. The fabrication method of claim 47, wherein the diverter component is formed on the  
2 monolithic substrate.

1 49. The fabrication method of claim 46, further comprising the step of fabricating an input  
2 optical structure by semiconductor fabrication processes.

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1 50. The fabrication method of claim 46, further comprising the step of fabricating an output  
2 optical structure by semiconductor fabrication processes.

1 51. The fabrication method of claim 46, further comprising the steps of:  
2 providing a second diverter adjacent to said miniature monolithic optical demultiplexer,  
3 said diverter receiving a second input beam having a purified single color substantially  
4 identical to the purified single color of said output beam that is diverted; and  
5 optionally fabricating, utilizing semiconductor fabrication methods, a second wavelength  
6 dispersive optical element, said second wavelength dispersive optical element capable  
7 of combining a plurality of spatially-separated substantially single color optical beams,  
8 at least one beam containing primarily a single color that is different than the color of  
9 another substantially single color optical beam, into a single beam having a plurality of  
10 spatially overlapping distinct colors;  
11 wherein said second diverter is adapted to direct said second input beam for combination  
12 with another spatially-separated substantially single color optical beam having a color  
13 distinct from that of said second input beam to form a second output beam having a  
14 plurality of spatially overlapping distinct colors, using a selected one of said  
15 wavelength dispersive optical element and said optionally fabricated second  
16 wavelength dispersive optical element to effect said combination.

1 52. An optical apparatus, comprising  
2 a wavelength dispersive optical element receiving a substantially collimated input  
3 signal having multiple wavelengths and providing a wavelength dispersed output  
4 signal; and  
5 a spatial modulator element receiving said wavelength dispersed output signal and

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6 providing an output signal comprising at least a portion of each dispersed wavelength.

1 53. The optical apparatus of claim 52, further comprising  
2 a second wavelength dispersive optical element receiving said output signal provided  
3 by said spatial modulator and providing a substantially collimated output signal.

1 54. The optical apparatus of claim 53, wherein said substantially collimated output signal is  
2 directed in substantially the same direction as that of said substantially collimated input signal.

1 55. The optical apparatus of claim 52, further comprising  
2 an absorbing surface that absorbs selected wavelengths from said spatial modulator  
3 output signal, said spatial modulator controlling said selection.

1 56. The optical apparatus of claim 55, wherein said spatial modulator dynamically controls  
2 which of said selected wavelengths from said wavelength dispersed output signal are to be  
3 absorbed.

1 57. The optical apparatus of claim 52, further comprising a variable reflection filter to select  
2 wavelengths from said wavelength dispersed output signal to be reflected.

1 58. The optical apparatus of claim 52, further comprising a variable transmission filter to  
2 select wavelengths from said wavelength dispersed output signal to be transmitted.

1 59. An optical apparatus, comprising  
2 a wavelength dispersive optical element receiving a substantially collimated input

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3 signal propagating in a first direction, said input signal having multiple wavelengths,  
4 and providing a wavelength dispersed output signal;  
5 a spatial modulator element receiving said wavelength dispersed output signal and  
6 providing an output signal comprising at least a portion of each dispersed  
7 wavelength; and  
8 the wavelength dispersive optical element receiving said output signal provided by said  
9 spatial modulator and providing a substantially collimated output signal propagating  
10 in a second direction.

1 60. The optical apparatus of claim 59, wherein said second direction of propagation is  
2 substantially opposite to said first direction of propagation.

1 61. An optical apparatus, comprising  
2 a wavelength dispersive optical element receiving a substantially collimated input  
3 signal propagating in a first direction, said input signal having multiple wavelengths,  
4 and providing a first wavelength dispersed output signal and a second wavelength  
5 dispersed output signal;  
6 a spatial modulator element receiving said first wavelength dispersed output signal and  
7 said second wavelength dispersed output signal and providing a transmitted output  
8 signal and a reflected signal; and  
9 a collimating optical element receiving said reflected signal and providing a  
10 substantially collimated output signal propagating in a second direction substantially  
11 opposite to said first direction.

1 62. The optical apparatus of claim 61, wherein said wavelength dispersive optical element

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2 and said collimating optical element are the same optical structure viewed from opposite ends  
3 thereof.

1 63. The optical apparatus of claim 61, wherein one of said transmitted output signal and said  
2 reflected signal comprises a signal modulated to have substantially zero intensity.

1 64. A monolithic optical apparatus, comprising  
2 a wavelength dispersive optical element receiving a substantially collimated input  
3 signal having multiple wavelengths and providing a wavelength dispersed output  
4 signal; and  
5 a spatial modulator element receiving said wavelength dispersed output signal and  
6 providing an output signal comprising at least a portion of each dispersed  
7 wavelength;  
8 wherein said wavelength dispersive optical element and said spatial modulator element  
9 are provided on a single substrate.

1 65. A microelectromechanical optical apparatus, comprising  
2 a wavelength dispersive optical element receiving a substantially collimated input  
3 signal having multiple wavelengths and providing a wavelength dispersed output  
4 signal; and  
5 a spatial modulator element receiving said wavelength dispersed output signal and  
6 providing an output signal comprising at least a portion of each dispersed wavelength.

1 66. The microelectromechanical optical apparatus of claim 65, wherein said wavelength  
2 dispersive optical element and said spatial modulator element are collocated on a single

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3 substrate.

1 67. The microelectromechanical optical apparatus of claim 66, wherein said single substrate  
2 comprises a single crystal.

1 68. The microelectromechanical optical apparatus of claim 66, wherein said single substrate  
2 comprises a semiconductor single crystal.

1 69. The microelectromechanical optical apparatus of claim 66, wherein said single substrate  
2 comprises a polycrystalline material.

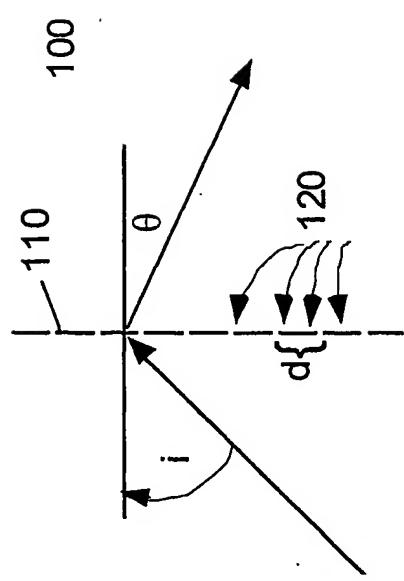


Figure 1

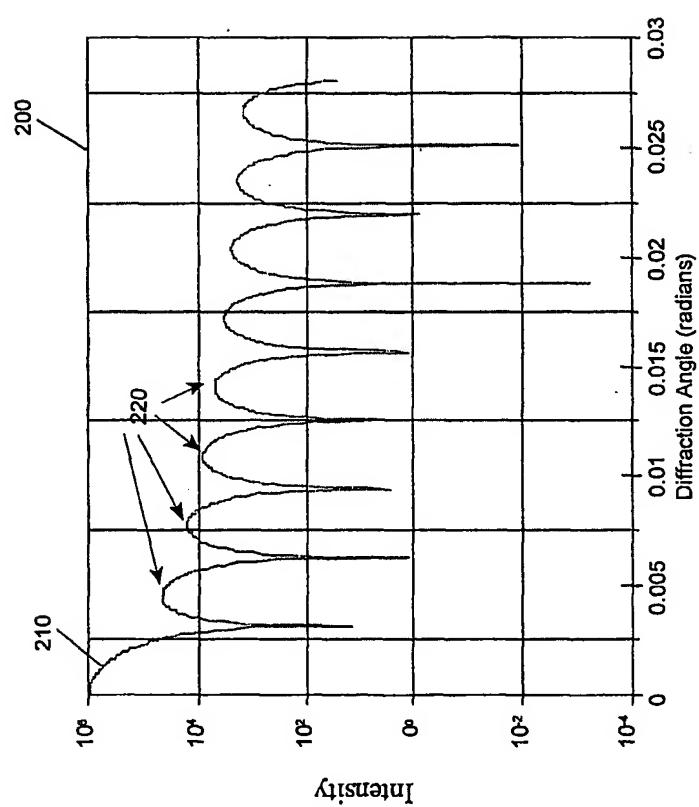


Figure 2

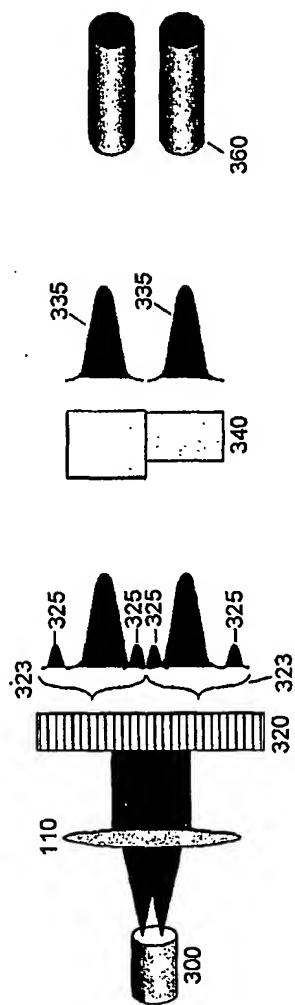


Figure 3

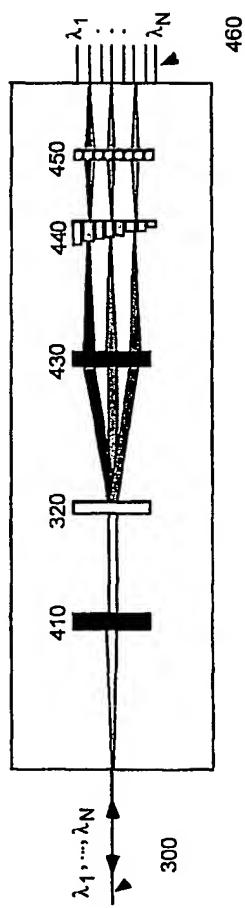


Figure 4

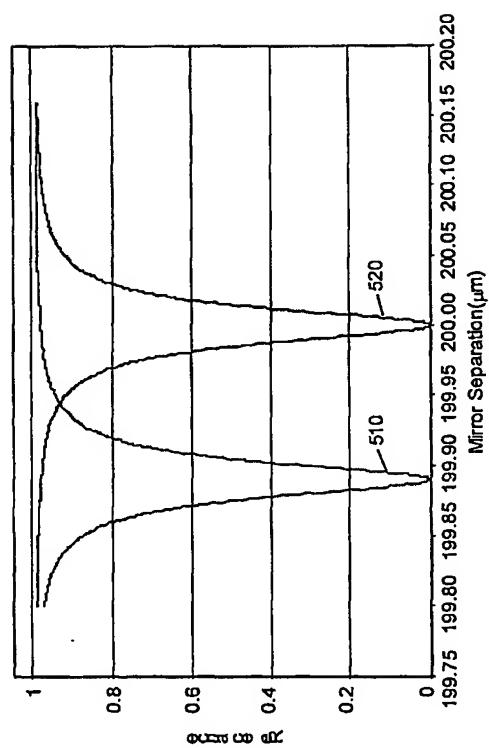


Figure 5

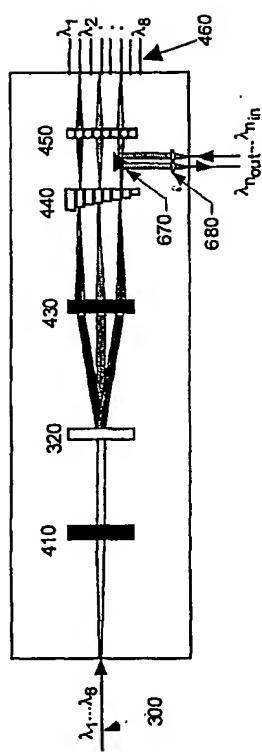


Figure 6